

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-16 are pending. Claims 1-13 are amended, and claims 14-16 are added. Claims 1, 5, and 9 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has recognized Applicants' claim for foreign priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document. No additional action is required at this time.

Drawings

The drawings are objected to for failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. §1.84 and on the grounds that FIGS. 10(a) and 10(b) are not designated by a legend such as "Prior Art", and reference numeral 1106 is not identified in the drawings.

Attached are revised formal drawings for FIGS. 4, 5, 9, 10(a), and 10(b), in which length L3 is labeled in FIG. 5, length L4 is labeled in FIG. 9, and hollow portion 1107 is identified in FIGS. 10(a) and 10(b). In addition, FIGS. 10(a) and 10(b) are labeled as "Background Art", consistent with paragraph [0007] of the specification. Further, the Examiner is directed to paragraph [0008] of the specification, which identifies frame body 1106. Note, also, that paragraphs [0083] and [00109] of the specification are amended to refer to lengths L3 and L4, respectively.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to the drawings are respectfully requested.

Acknowledgement of Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner has acknowledged receipt of the Information Disclosure Statement filed March 7, 2002, and has returned an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449. No further action is necessary at this time.

Objections to Specification and Claims

The specification and claims 1 and 5 are objected to as containing informalities and are amended herein to address the issues noted by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of these objections are, therefore, respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claims 1-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1, 2, 5, and 6 are amended to address the issues noted by the Examiner. It is respectfully submitted that the amended claims particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), §102(e), and §103(a)

Claims 1, 3, 5, and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated over Myers (U.S. 3,831,997); claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Hachet et al. (U.S. 6,158,356); and claims 9 and 11-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Renault (U.S. 6,435,577). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

• **Amendments to Independent Claim 1**

While not conceding the appropriateness of the rejections, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended to recite a pair of shock absorbing members having front ends connected at rear ends of the bumper member, the shock absorbing members having rear ends fitted into a pair of receiving portions at a rear of a vehicle body frame, the receiving portions being located rearwardly of a rear end of a floor of the vehicle.

Support for the above limitations can be found in the specification, for example, in paragraphs [0044] and [0060]. See also Figs. 1 and 3.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of elements set forth in independent claim 1 is not anticipated or made obvious by the cited art of record, including Myers and Hachet et al. In particular, neither of these documents teaches or suggests shock absorbing members having rear ends fitted into a pair of receiving portions at a rear of a vehicle body frame, the receiving portions being located rearwardly of a rear end of a floor of the vehicle.

Accordingly, independent claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, are distinguished over the cited art, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and (e) are respectfully requested.

• **Amendments to Independent Claim 5**

While not conceding the appropriateness of the rejections, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 5 is amended herein to recite a combination of elements in a shock absorbing structure, including a pair of shock absorbing members connected at rear ends of the bumper member, the shock absorbing members being disposed adjacently to right and left sides of a seat of the vehicle.

Support for the above limitations can be seen, e.g., in FIG. 3.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of elements set forth in independent claim 5 is not anticipated or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Myers and Hachet et al.

In particular, Myers (Fig. 1) merely shows shock absorber 24 in front of the vehicle, and corrugated sheet metal section 22 at floor level of the vehicle, and Hachet et al. merely discloses shock absorbing structure 9-11 disposed at a front of the vehicle. Neither of these documents teaches or suggests a pair of shock absorbers disposed adjacent to right and left sides of a vehicle seat, as set forth in claim 5 of the present invention.

Accordingly, independent claim 5, and the claims depending therefrom, are distinguished over the cited art, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and (e) are respectfully requested.

Amendments to Independent Claim 9

While not conceding the appropriateness of the rejections, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 9 is amended herein to recite a combination of elements in a shock absorbing structure, including upper and lower shock absorbing members being formed of two types of members having different crushing features, and being mounted over a front wheel of the vehicle and project forwardly of the front wheel by a predetermined length.

Support for the above limitations can be seen, for example, in FIGS. 5 and 9.

It is respectfully submitted that the combination of elements set forth in independent claim 9 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Renault.

In particular, Renault merely discloses upper and lower absorbers 10 and 32 mounted in bumper skin 34, and fails to teach or suggest upper and lower shock absorbing members which are mounted over a front wheel of the vehicle and project forwardly of the front wheel by a predetermined length.

Accordingly, independent claim 9, and the claims depending therefrom, are distinguished over the cited art, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

Added Claims 14-16

The Examiner will note that claims 14, 15, and 16 are added to set forth additional features of the present not taught or suggested by the cited references. Claims 14, 15, and 16 depend from independent claims 1, 5, and 9, respectively, and are allowable for at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to the independent claims.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

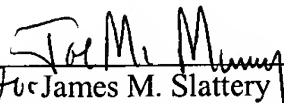
If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to debit Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fee required under 37 C.F.R.

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Amendment dated September 25, 2003
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§1.16 or §1.17, particularly extension of time fees, or to credit said Deposit Account for any overpayment of fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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Attachments
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